

Tips from the Field: Helpful Suggestions from People On an Unaccompanied Tour

Calling all cooks...

I can tell you that the very best way to show one's love to someone on an unaccompanied tour/deployment overseas is to send something homemade. Cookies, brownies, whatever. One need not be a gourmet pastry chef or have any special expertise, just follow a recipe and make plenty of it. The entire group will share it and it'll be gone in an hour, but the warm feeling of love will remain, within each person and in the unit and everyone they deal with, for quite a long time.

Missing Fluffy?

We took care of my son's dog during his tour and sent him videos online of his dog playing in the snow during the winter. The Dog Whisperer DVDs were also a hit!



If it's 10 AM here, what time is it in...

We keep a separate clock set for the time zone of the other person. It makes phone calling easier and the kids feel more connected to what mom is doing right now. (You may also be able to program a clock on your personal computer or use a site like this:

<http://www.timeanddate.com/worldclock/> to instantly check the time. See and set clocks on the internet here: <http://www.poodwaddle.com/clocks.htm>)

Your face 'here'

For my husband's birthday I let my 10 year old design a special stamp for dad's card. It was very easy, we went to the USPS site; bought the Customized Postage package. Then we took a great photo of our family- even the dog, in order to process it into a stamp. It made my husband's birthday special even if we couldn't celebrate together. We might just do this for Christmas!

(USPS <http://www.usps.com/postagesolutions/customizedpostage.htm>)



Putting the "R's" in R&R

Be careful where you spend R&R, remember you really do need some rest and recuperation. Going to another country where you have limited mobility, have to be careful of what you eat and who you talk to; may not be what you need, even though it is a great vacation spot. Pick a spot where you all can really have time to do something different and have freedom of movement. Make things easier for yourself-you deserve it!

What's the hype with Skype?

Wish your loved ones could visit you in Iraq, but a little thing called "war" is standing in the way? No problem. Skype is the answer. It's free, it works, and is the best way to remain connected to family." Download it on your personal computer at <http://www.skype.com/> (Tip from http://www.wingtipsontheground.com/Site/Iraq_Packing_List.html)

School's out for summer

It really worked well for our family to set up a joint email account with my son's school so that both parents can communicate with teachers and administrators throughout the year.



Hungry? Why wait? (well you might have to...)



"I like to use netgrocer (<http://shop.netgrocer.com>) and igourmet (<http://www.igourmet.com/>) to order food, like my favorite organic coffee. It takes a bit longer for it to reach me here in Baghdad but it's worth it to me." *(Note: Both places will ship to APO/FPO. Netgrocer - APO/FPO shipping charges are based on the actual weight of your order, the number of boxes that comprise your order and the specific APO/FPO AA, AP or AE zip code you are shipping to. Igourmet - Use the table on the site to determine your base shipping rate and add a \$5 surcharge.)*

Taking time for yourself

When I do have those rare moments of free time, I pour myself into things I like to do but my wife doesn't. I have decided that during her tour in Islamabad, I'll make this an opportunity to do the things I enjoy but haven't done for a while because they are not shared interests for us as a couple.

Goodnight Moon...Goodnight Mom...

I think it would be a great idea to have some of the more popular young children's books at post so I can read to my five-year old son through the webcam on my laptop and he can follow along with his copy at home. I think I'll ask my husband to mail me some and then just leave them at the Embassy for other people.

Miss the last episode of "The Office"?

Before I left, my husband bought me an Ipod and downloaded a bunch of our favorite TV shows I did not have time to watch when I was preparing to go to Kabul. Now I download the latest episodes directly to my Ipod so my husband and I can talk about them the next day.

If you have tips you'd like to share or questions contact FLOaskUT@state.gov